

APPENDIX F

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property Palumbo Property

historic name Bethel Church

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 100 Christiana Road (DE RT 273)

☐ not for publication

city, town New Castle

☐ vicinity

state Delaware

code DE

county New Castle

code DE 003

zip code

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☐ building(s)
☐ district
☒ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
_____	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register _____

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Structure

Church related Residence

Church School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commercial/Trade: Professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

This property, at 100 Christiana Road, was not aligned to true north and south. Instead, it was aligned 37 degrees east and west of north. This configuration is probably due to the original boundaries of the New Castle Commons, which abutted the Bethel Church site along its eastern boundary. The land north and west of the church site, belongs to the "Morvan Farm". Members of the Morton family originally provided the southeast corner of the farm for the church; therefore, during most of the life of the church, they held the deed to the half acre on which the church stood. In addition, bequests by members added a total of three acres to the holdings of the Bethel Church. Today, the original deed is in the possession of the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church.

The meeting house and any other structures associated with it are no longer extant. A gray frame house and garage of 1950-1960s vintage occupy the lot fronting Route 273. Dr. Valdez, a member of a "Doctor's Group", uses the house to see patients. A gravel drive leads into the property, and a split rail fence surrounds part of the land. An open well is in the southeast part the front yard, its crumbling cement cap has mostly fallen into the well.

North of the Valdez back-yard, there is a wooded area primarily of wild block locust trees, thorn bushes, and poison ivy. In the summer, the lot is practically impenetrable because of the thickness of the underbrush. Beyond these woods is the cemetery associated with the Bethel Baptist Church. The oldest grave marker found was that of Francis Lowen Cooch, who died on August 27, 1791 (Zebley 1947:366). The latest stone found dated to the 1940s. This cemetery also contains members of the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church. These graves were moved from Wilmington when the City-County Building was to be built on their cemetery. Traces of the road that led to the church and cemetery are still out-lined by trees along the northwest boundary of the site, and the gate to the cemetery is still there, although most of the fence is not.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Archaeology: Historic-non aboriginal

Religion

Period of Significance

1790-1900

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

19th century historic

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bethel Church has a long and interesting history, beginning with its founding as a "mission" of the Welsh Tract Church at the foot of Iron Hill, near Newark, Delaware. As early as 1786 a log church was built on land provided by a neighboring parishioner and farmer, David Morton. In 1838-9 the Bethel Church was established as a church in its own right. Church officials had regular business meetings, of which kept careful records.

The church reached its apex in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was then that the church contained the most members, most of them quite active in church affairs. Members of the church included blacks, as well as whites, which suggests an especially enlightened attitude on the part of the parishioners, particularly for that time.

The cemetery behind the church had always been a very important component of church business. Not only were church members buried there, but others as well. The original half acre with which the church started increased to three acres through donations. A school was planned to be converted into a house for the sexton. Later a parsonage is mentioned. Maps show as many as three structures on the site in 1868.

Church membership declined during the last third of the nineteenth century. After 1871 Bethel Church ceased to send a representative to the Baptist Association; however, the church attempted a resurrection in 1922. The handful of new members met in a private house and tried very hard to keep the church going. They even tried to incorporate. No record of this incorporation has been found.

The life of the Bethel Church spanned approximately 150 years, beginning at the end of the Revolutionary War and continuing to World War II. It must be said, that this period in history probably saw the greatest transformation in the western world, than any other time. It was a time when American society

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, Ann, Kenneth J. Basalik, and Alan Tabachnick
1988 Investigations of Cultural Resources: Delaware Route 273: DE RT 7 to
U.S. RT 13, New Castle County, Delaware. DelDot Archaeology Series
Dover

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.8 acres

UTM References

A 18 447040 4390540
Zone Easting Northing
C 18 447190 4390650

B 18 447110 4390540
Zone Easting Northing
D 18 447130 4390680

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The southern boundary of the site extends along Delaware Route 273 for a distance of 200 feet. The western boundary of the site corresponds roughly to an existing line of trees which follows the current property line from Rt 273 to the northwest corner of the cemetery. The northern boundary follows that of the cemetery, turning south at the cemetery's northeast corner and proceeding back to a point along Rt 273.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the site correspond to the distribution of artifactual material as found during site testing: Delaware Route 273 to the south, the historic road to the west, the northern edge of the cemetery, and the misc. disturbances found to the east.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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The soil at the Bethel Church site is Butlertown silt loam with a typical upper stratum consisting of 1.0 ft. of brown to dark brown silt loam. The subsoil is described as a stratum 3.3 ft. in depth comprised of yellowish brown silt loam or light, silty loam over a lower fragipan. Subsurface testing showed that much of the site conformed to this stratigraphic description and was undisturbed. Only four areas on the site exhibited any soil disturbances.

Although the Bethel Church meeting house and the other two structures between the church and Route 273, were gone, this site is relatively undisturbed. This is most likely due to the fact that, unlike the Welsh Tract School, the Bethel site was abandoned. For a number of years, up into the 1930s, the cemetery was cared for. In subsequent years, no one cared for the cemetery, and so today it is in poor condition due to extensive vandalism.

In all 157 shovel tests and 13 test units were conducted on the Bethel Baptist Church site. The soil appeared to be undisturbed except for some leveling probably related to landscaping. None of the tests contained any subsurface features other than disturbance related to the modern septic system and the open well filled with modern debris. The shovel tests did identify concentrations of types of artifacts and their horizontal patterns of deposit across the site. Analysis of the cultural material noted that this material was differentially distributed, suggesting relatively separate deposits for the church and the parsonage.

While it was known that the Bethel Church was constructed on top of stone piers, it had been hoped subsurface features associated to the other two structures, if not the church, would be present. Whether such features are still extant is unknown, but it is possible that the parsonage and sexton house may also have been built on stone piers.

The archaeological material recovered was generally domestic in nature probably relating to the sexton's dwelling and the parsonage, although the ceramic distributions, particularly of pearlware and porcelain suggest that some church activities may also be represented.

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was in a state of flux. Beginning in about the middle of the nineteenth century, immigrants were flowing in, and the population in the east was moving west. This was mirrored in the drop-off of those attending the Bethel Church, as reported in the Minutes "From this time on Church ... distitute [sic] ... (Bethel Church Minutes 1855).

Bethel Church really never did recover from this loss of members. The remaining member reunited with the Welsh Tract Church in about 1871, when there was a regular road between Hares Corner and Christiana and travel was easier. The land on both sides of the Christiana-New Castle Road maintained its rural character well into the twentieth century when the project area began to take to become increasingly suburban. Thus, the site spans the history of northern Delaware from its "Transformation from colony to state", through "Industrialization and capitalization" to "suburbanization" (see Herman and Sidler 1986).

References of locally important families and individuals appear in the minutes. Additionally, the Bethel Church admitted black members which unusual for the time; however, before they can be called free of prejudice, it must be remembered that the "colored Brethren have the northeast corner for their burying place" (Bethel Church Minutes 1822). The documents of the church also seem to contain indications about community organization in that the Bethel Church functioned as a focus of community organization.

The Bethel Church site possesses the potential to add to our understanding of a variety of public and private activities spanning the nineteenth century. Archaeological remains at the site include an historic cemetery and artifacts associated with the nineteenth century occupation of the site. The osteological remains have the potential to provide for an in depth study of nutrition and pathology of the local community through several periods of growth and change. The existence of church records and the remains of tombstones would allow for soci-economic and socio-cultural data to be gathered for the interred individuals, thereby providing a base-line upon which the osteological data can be examined. The artifactual data at the site has suggested that spatially segregated activity areas exist which could potentially reveal information concerning the functioning of the church site. Little such data is currently available (see Catts and Cunningham 1986). The clerical domestic occupation of the site provides a relatively unique opportunity for comparison with other types of domestic occupations in the immediate area (Basalik et al 1988, Grette, Watson and Custer 1988, see also Custer and Cunningham 1986). Based on documentary evidence, ethnic variations in the archaeological record may also exist which can be explored both within the site (between the sexton's house and church) and to other sites in the Middle Atlantic (see Schuyler 1980). The data collected has suggested that a number of research questions can be addressed:

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- 1) Are changes in artifact distribution present, and do they indicate changing spatial utilization? Can such changes in patterns be related to historically documented economic and social changes in the surrounding area?
- 2) Are there changes in the presence or frequencies of certain artifact classes through time that can be related to purchasing and consumption habits of the site's occupants?
- 3) Can changes in either of the above categories of data be analyzed for meaningful covariance?
- 4) Can distinctions be made between the nature of the artifact assemblage of the Bethel Church site (quality of goods, origin, cost, relative proportions) and those of more rural or urban sites in northern Delaware? Do these distinctions covary with time or structure function? Can they be explained through site placement or socio-economic status?
- 5) Can changes in spatial utilization be observed within around the Bethel Church site? How do these compare with nearby sites? What temporal factors can be discerned?
- 6) Can the occupation of the grounds by the Black Sexton be spatially segregated? Is there a significant variation in the nature or type of cultural assemblage associated with this occupation.
- 7) What nutritional and pathological anomalies existed in the community? How did these change through time? Is there a correlation between local social and economic transformation and the health of the local community.

On the basis of the data available, the site is likely to provide information important in history and is eligible for listing on the national Register of Historic Places (36CFR60.4(d)). In addition the significance of the Bethel Church site can be found in its association with lives of persons significant to northern Delaware's past (36CFR60.4(b)).

